DC
BAT MAN
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YOU'RE OUT!
THE NEW
THERE'S NO STOPPING US NOW.
HANNIGAN + GIORDANO

IN A BASEMENT ON GOTHAM'S UPPER WEST SIDE, DR. FANG SWEATS.
THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE FIGHT GAME, WOAD.
THERE ARE THOSE WHO MAKE THE RULES--THE PROMOTERS, COMMISSIONERS, JUDGES, AND ALL THE OTHERS WITH BELLIES TOO FAT TO FIT BETWEEN THE ROPES.
THE FIGHTERS THEMSELVES ARE SUBSERVIENT TO THE RULES.
AND FINALLY THERE ARE THOSE WHO BECAME INDEPENDENT OF THE RULES--BUT ONLY BY WALKING AWAY FROM THE ENTIRE SCENE FOREVER.
YEAH, BUT THE KINDA FIGHT YOU WANNA FIX--A HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE SHOT WITH HEAVY ACTION BUT HEAVY ODDS TOO... A FIGHT LIKE THAT DON'T EXIST--IT'S A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS.
YOU'RE DREAMIN', BOSS.
G-116

WHAT PRICE, THE PRIZE?

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IF SO, I'M DREAMING ABOUT HOW I COULD HAVE WON THE TITLE, HAD I BEEN SUBSERVIENT RATHER THAN INDEPENDENT.
AND PERHAPS I'M STILL DREAMING ABOUT PUTTING MY MARK ON THE TITLE--
--NOT BY FIGHTING OR WALKING AWAY, BUT BY MAKING NEW RULES.
EVERY PRIZE FIGHT HAS ITS PRICE, WOAD.
WE'RE GOING TO FIX THE PRICE AND WIN THE PRIZE-- THE TITLE AND A FORTUNE.
HOW?
IMAGINE I JUST CAUGHT YOU WITH A PERFECT RIGHT CROSS, DRIVING YOUR HEAD NINETY DEGREES TO THE RIGHT...
TOMMY DU
HEY, YOU ALMOST HIT M--
THAT'S TOMMY DUNFEY.
AGAINST THE CHAMP, HE'D BE A FIVE TO ONE UNDERDOG--FIGHTS OUT OF BRONK'S 10th STREET GYM UNDER A TRAINER NAMED RUDY.
I WANT YOU TO GO TO 10th STREET, WOAD-- TALK TO RUDY.
BUT--
DID I EVER TELL YOU MY NICKNAME IN THE RING WAS "COBRA"?
NO, BUT--
AND MY GREATEST ROLE ON THE STAGE WAS DRACULA.
YEAH, I KNOW, BUT--
THAT'S WHY, WHEN I LEFT BOTH THOSE WORLDS BEHIND--
--I TOOK THE NAME DR. FANG.
10th STREET, WOAD, AND TALK PERSUASIVELY. THINK OF IT AS TRAINING FOR A LATER, BIGGER BOUT--
--WHEN YOU'LL HAVE TO TALK TO THE CHAMP--AND KNOCK HIM DEAD.
2

THIRTY-TWO BLOCKS SOUTH...
HE'S MINE, ROBIN!

FRAK!
YOU SAID IT, BATMAN-- A RIGHT HOOK WORTHY OF THE CHAMP!

BUT THE CLOAKED AVENGER OF THE NIGHT IS NOT PLEASED...
MAYBE, ROBIN, BUT HARDLY WORTH USING ON THIS CHEAP HOOD.
AND THERE'S NO SIGN OF DR. FANG ANYWHERE--HE HASN'T MADE A MOVE IN WEEKS.

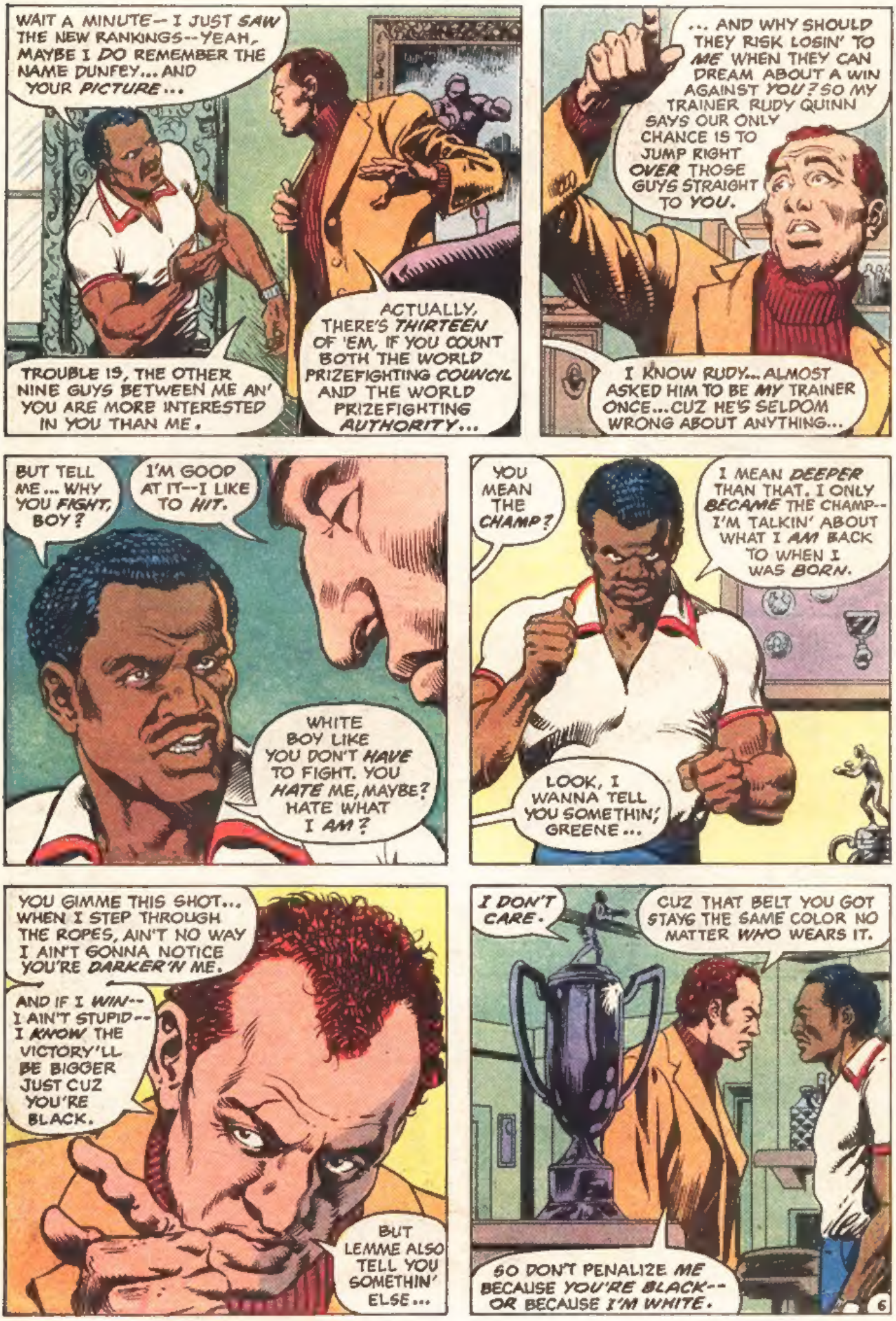
WELL, WE DID PUT A SIZABLE DENT IN HIS GANG.
IN GOTHAM, HIRED THUGS ARE A DIME A DOZEN, ROBIN. HE COULD--
EH? WHAT'S THAT?

IT'S FANG'S PHONY CANINE.
I DECIDED TO WEAR IT UNTIL WE CATCH HIM--TO REMIND ME OF HOW STRONG AND FAST HE IS...
...AND HOW I ALMOST LOST MY THROAT TO HIM.

I SEE.
JUST DON'T LET IT BECOME... A FETISH.

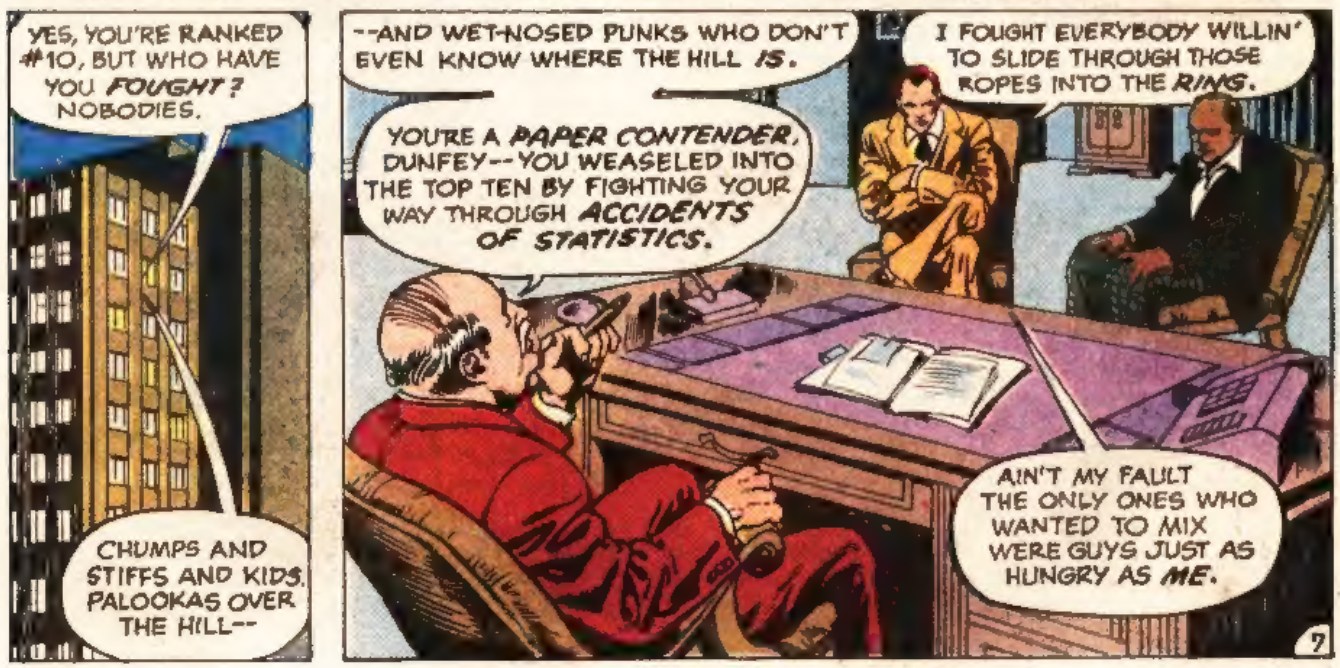
BRONK'S GYM
SOMETIMES I THINK FANG STAYED IN THE RING TOO LONG-- AND ALL THOSE PUNCHES SPONGED HIS BRAIN.
UHN!
C'MON, LOU-- HEAVIER ON THOSE BODY SHOTS! SPARRIN' AROUND HERE DON'T MEAN SHOWTIME!
NICE LOOKIN' FIGHTER YOU GOT THERE.
HE'S ALL RIGHT-- FOR A YOUNG UP AN' COMER.
RUDY, MY BOSS IS OF THE OPINION THAT YOU'RE FAR TOO MODEST.
WHERE CAN WE TALK?
THREE DAYS LATER, TOMMY DUNFEY STRIDES INTO ANOTHER WORLD...
NOW, THIS IS SHOWTIME.
HOPE HE'S HOME.
HE IS.
THROW IT, JIMMY-- DADDY'S WATCHING!
BUT I JUST WANNA--
GET HIS FACE OUT OF HERE!
GOT A RUCKUS, HAROLD?
JUST SOME FIGHTER, CHAMP--STRICTLY A CHUMP--SAYS HE GOTTA TALK TO YOU.
WE FIXIN' TO CHASE HIM HARD.
4
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

OH HELL, HAROLD, I HAD IDOLS MYSELF ONCE--LET HIM IN.
HE WHITE.
YOU SAY THAT WORD LIKE IT'S SOME KIND OF POISON.
AIN'T IT?
MAYBE, BUT I'VE TASTED IT SO MANY TIMES I'M IMMUNE BY NOW.
SAY, ACE--MY BODYGUARD SAYS YOU'RE A FIGHTER. IS THAT JUST WHEN YOU'RE FORCIN' YOUR WAY THROUGH SOMEBODY'S DOOR OR YOU EVER DARE THE RING?
IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU, MR. GREENE.
MY NAME'S TOMMY DUNFEY--YOU PROB'LY DON'T RECOGNIZE ME CUZ I NEVER FOUGHT ON TV IN A BIG-PURSE BOUT...
...WHICH IS WHY I COME HERE--
--TO RECTIFY THAT BY ASKIN' YOU PERSONAL FOR A SHOT.
A SHOT--? AT ME?
AT YOUR BELT--BUT DON'T WORRY, NOT BELOW IT.
AT THE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE WORLD? IS THAT WHY YOU CAME HERE?
RATHER GO TO MY GRANDMA'S HOUSE, BUT SHE AIN'T GOT WHAT I WANT.
LEMME GET THIS STRAIGHT--YOU THINK BY JUST POUNDIN' ON MY DOOR, YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT?
I AIN'T BEEN HEARIN' YOUR KNUCKLES ON MY DOOR.
SEE, WHEN A MAN WANTS SOMETHIN' FROM ANOTHER MAN, I FIGURE THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE IT IS MAN TO MAN--WHICH IS MAYBE WHY I LIKE THE RING SO MUCH.
YOU GOT TO EARN MY RING, BOY.
NO FIGHT ON THAT SCORE, BUT I AM RANKED #10 NOW...
5


WAIT A MINUTE-- I JUST SAW THE NEW RANKINGS--YEAH, MAYBE I DO REMEMBER THE NAME DUNFEY... AND YOUR PICTURE...
ACTUALLY, THERE'S THIRTEEN OF 'EM, IF YOU COUNT BOTH THE WORLD PRIZEFIGHTING COUNCIL AND THE WORLD PRIZEFIGHTING AUTHORITY...
TROUBLE IS, THE OTHER NINE GUYS BETWEEN ME AN' YOU ARE MORE INTERESTED IN YOU THAN ME.
... AND WHY SHOULD THEY RISK LOSIN' TO ME WHEN THEY CAN DREAM ABOUT A WIN AGAINST YOU? SO MY TRAINER RUDY QUINN SAYS OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO JUMP RIGHT OVER THOSE GUYS STRAIGHT TO YOU.
I KNOW RUDY... ALMOST ASKED HIM TO BE MY TRAINER ONCE... CUZ HE'S SELDOM WRONG ABOUT ANYTHING...
BUT TELL ME... WHY YOU FIGHT, BOY?
I'M GOOD AT IT--I LIKE TO HIT.
WHITE BOY LIKE YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT. YOU HATE ME, MAYBE? HATE WHAT I AM?
YOU MEAN THE CHAMP?
I MEAN DEEPER THAN THAT. I ONLY BECAME THE CHAMP-- I'M TALKIN' ABOUT WHAT I AM BACK TO WHEN I WAS BORN.
LOOK, I WANNA TELL YOU SOMETHIN', GREENE...
YOU GIMME THIS SHOT... WHEN I STEP THROUGH THE ROPES, AIN'T NO WAY I AIN'T GONNA NOTICE YOU'RE DARKER'N ME.
AND IF I WIN-- I AIN'T STUPID-- I KNOW THE VICTORY'LL BE BIGGER JUST CUZ YOU'RE BLACK.
BUT LEMME ALSO TELL YOU SOMETHIN' ELSE...
I DON'T CARE.
CUZ THAT BELT YOU GOT STAYG THE SAME COLOR NO MATTER WHO WEARS IT.
SO DON'T PENALIZE ME BECAUSE YOU'RE BLACK-- OR BECAUSE I'M WHITE.
6

I HOPE YOU DON'T THINK I'M SCARED, DUNFEY.
I CAN HOPE, CAN'T I?--CUZ I SURE AS HELL AM.
THEN YOU REALLY WANT IT?
ENOUGH TO TAKE IT.
THEN... MAYBE I'M CRAZY... BUT IF YOU AN' RUDY CAN GET THE COUNCIL'S SANCTION--
--YOU GOT IT, BOSS.
THE CHANCE, THAT IS, NOT THE BELT.
WE'LL SEE, CHAMP.
IN THE MEAN-TIME, THANKS FOR THIS MUCH.
NICE KIDS YOU GOT OUT THERE IN THE POOL--HOPE TO HAVE SOME MYSELF SOMEDAY.
YEAH. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I GOT NICER THAN THAT BELT YOU WANT SO BAD, IT'S THEM KIDS AND THEY MOTHER.

IN MIDTOWN A FEW DAYS LATER, WHERE GOTHAM'S RENTS ARE HIGHEST...


YES, YOU'RE RANKED #10, BUT WHO HAVE YOU FOUGHT? NOBODIES.
CHUMPS AND STIFFS AND KIDS. PALOOKAS OVER THE HILL--
--AND WET-NOSED PUNKS WHO DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THE HILL IS.
YOU'RE A PAPER CONTENDER, DUNFEY--YOU WEASELED INTO THE TOP TEN BY FIGHTING YOUR WAY THROUGH ACCIDENTS OF STATISTICS.
I FOUGHT EVERYBODY WILLIN' TO SLIDE THROUGH THOSE ROPES INTO THE RING.
AIN'T MY FAULT THE ONLY ONES WHO WANTED TO MIX WERE GUYS JUST AS HUNGRY AS ME.

THE OTHER FIGHTERS-- THE GUYS WHO WOULDA GIVEN ME THE TOUGH FIGHTS WHEN I NEEDED 'EM--
--THEY WERE TOO SELFISH TO WASTE A SPOT ON THEIR DANCE CARDS.
THEY DIDN'T WANNA RISK THEIR OWN SHOT AT THE CHAMP OR THEIR HOPES FOR A BIG-MONEY REMATCH BY LOSIN' TO ME --
--SO IF YOU ASK ME, I BEAT EVERY ONE OF 'EM BY FORFEIT--
--AND IF YOU WOULDA FORCED 'EM TO TAKE ME ON, I'DA BEEN IN THE RING THREE DAYS EARLY WITH MY GLOVES ALREADY LACED.'
NOW YOU JUST WATCH WHO YOU'RE--
IT'S YOUR SYSTEM, COMMISSIONER.
IF THE FIGHTERS CAN LIVE AND BLEED BY THE RULES-- STATISTICS AND ALL-- THEN DON'T YOU THINK THE COUNCIL SHOULD?
EVERY SYSTEM IS IMPERFECT, QUINN, AND IT'S MY JOB TO SEE THAT THE SYSTEM--
DOES WHAT? AWARD ONLY HALF A CROWN IN THE FIRST PLACE?
THANKS TO YOU AND YOUR COMPETITION ACROSS THE STREET, ANY GUY WHO WANTS TO BE TRUE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD HAS TO GO OUT AND WIN IT TWICE--
--BEFORE HE CAN DEFEND HIS PRIZE ONCE--AND ONLY IF YOU ALLOW IT.'
LISTEN, YOU BENT-NOSED LUMP-FACED ARROGANT--
HE DIDN'T MEAN IT, COMMISSIONER--HE'S JUST ALL HOT-UP, WANTIN' THIS BOUT SO BAD HE'S READY TO FIGHT THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS JUST TO GET TO A BUS HONKIN' ITS HORN OFF-KEY.
8

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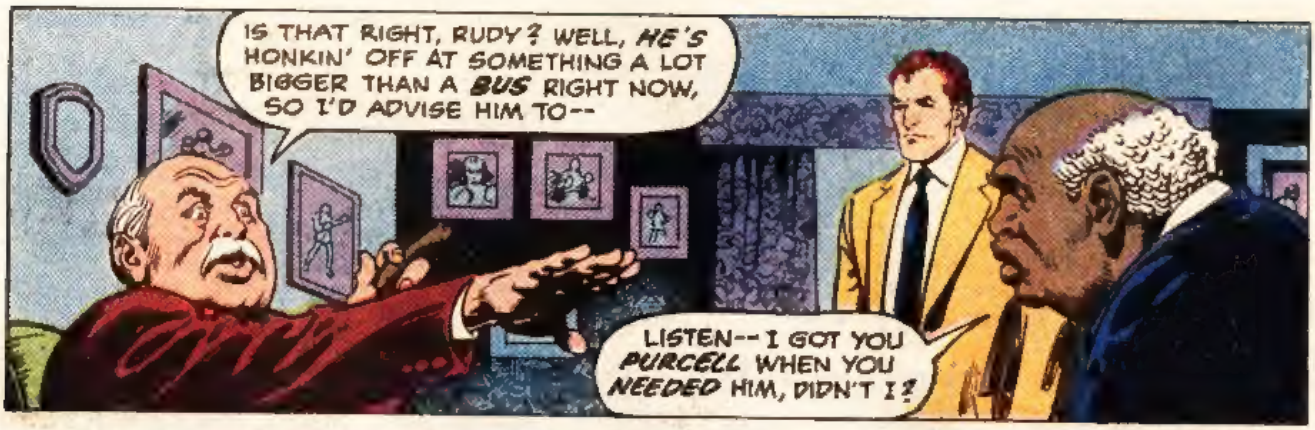
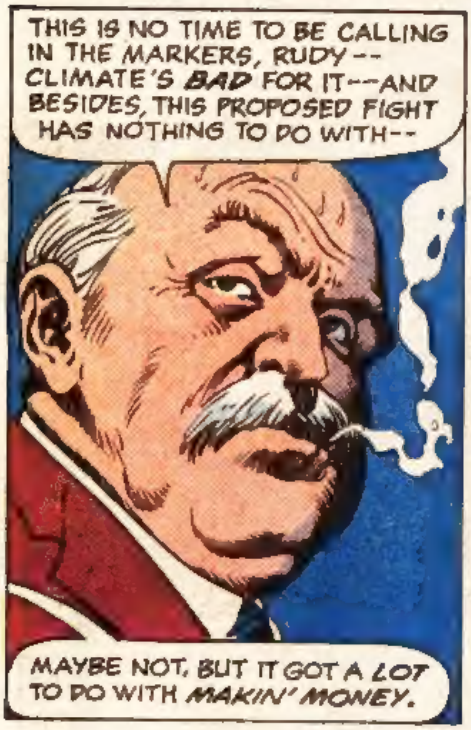
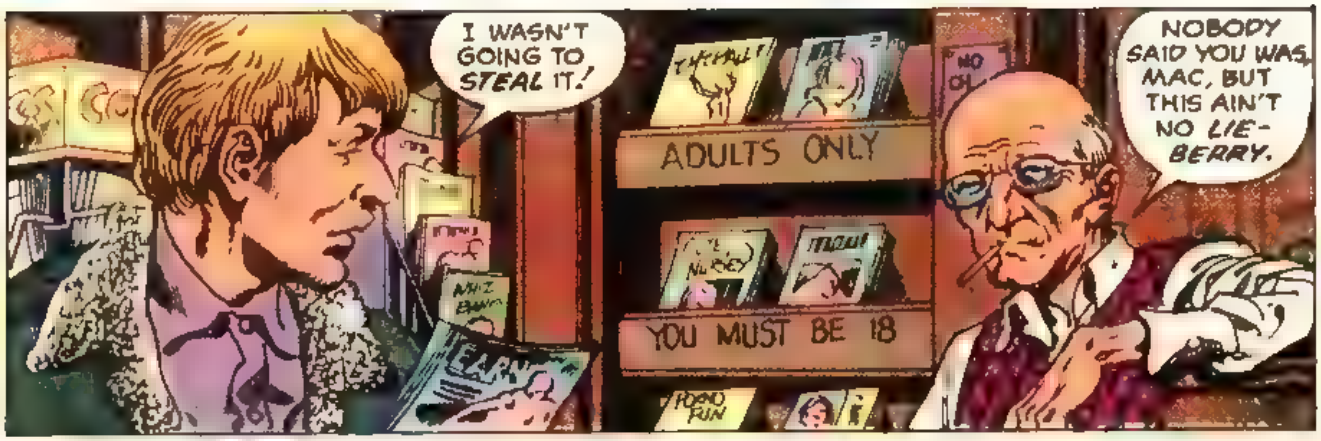

IS THAT RIGHT, RUDY? WELL, HE'S HONKIN' OFF AT SOMETHING A LOT BIGGER THAN A BUS RIGHT NOW, SO I'D ADVISE HIM TO--
LISTEN-- I GOT YOU PURCELL WHEN YOU NEEDED HIM, DIDN'T I?


THIS IS NO TIME TO BE CALLING IN THE MARKERS, RUDY-- CLIMATE'S BAD FOR IT--AND BESIDES, THIS PROPOSED FIGHT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH--
MAYBE NOT, BUT IT GOT A LOT TO DO WITH MAKIN' MONEY.

MAYBE IT AIN'T A CINCH--OR EVEN LIKELY-- BUT WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO SEE MY BOY DESTROY THE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD?
THE BLACK CHAMPION OF THE WORLD?

ALL RIGHT, RUDY.
YOU'VE GOT YOUR SANCTION.

THAT'S A TWO BUCK MAGAZINE, MAC.
RINGSIDE
THE FIGHT WITH EVERYTHING!
GREENE VS. DUNFEY
A CLASSY CHAMP
UNDERDOG WHITE HOPE
AND... THE END OF RECLUSE JAKE DEMANSKY'S 45 YR ABSENCE FROM THE RING?

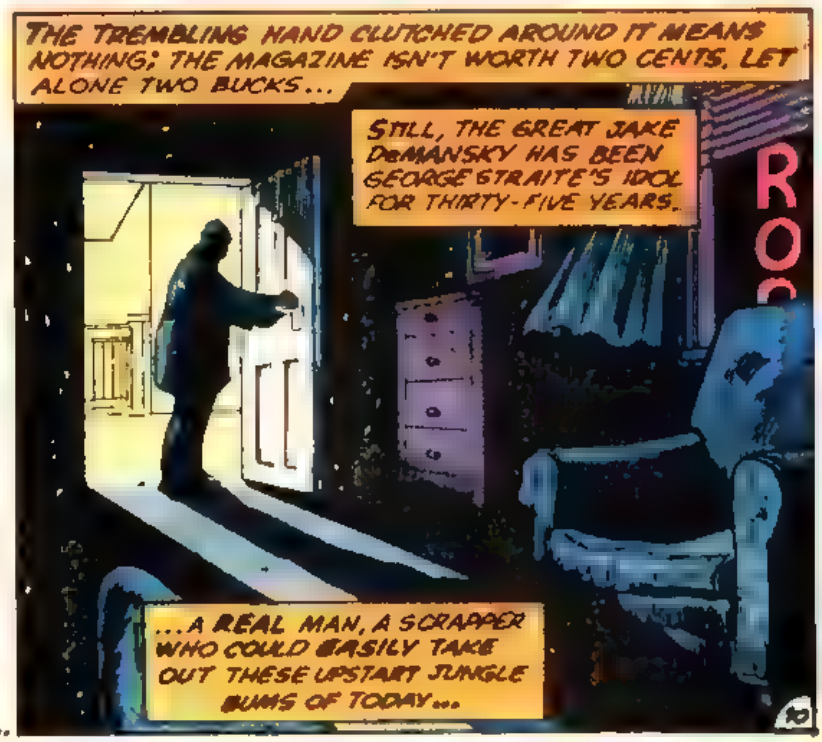


...PAST THE FAMILIAR BAR HE NEVER ENTERS...

HEY, DIDJA HEAR DeMANSKY'S GONNA REF THE FIGHT NEXT WEEK.
SALE
THEY HADDA TOSS IN SOME KINDA DRAW..
WITH THAT BUM DUNFEY, IT'S THE CHUMP AGAINST THE CHAMP.

HEY, I SEEN DUNFEY FIGHT-- HE AIN'T BAD.
HE COULD BUST UP YOUR FACE REAL GOOD!
YEAH? AND HOW 'BOUT YOU CHUMP?--NOT THAT YOUR FACE NEEDS IT.

...FINALLY REACHING THE SANCTITY OF HIS HOME...


THE TREMBLING HAND CLUTCHED AROUND IT MEANS NOTHING; THE MAGAZINE ISN'T WORTH TWO CENTS, LET ALONE TWO BUCKS...
STILL, THE GREAT JAKE DeMANSKY HAS BEEN GEORGE STRAITE'S IDOL FOR THIRTY-FIVE YEARS.
...A REAL MAN, A SCRAPPER WHO COULD EASILY TAKE OUT THESE UPSTART JUNGLE BUMS OF TODAY...

...AS WELL AS GEORGE STRAITE'S ONLY CONSTANT COMPANION AND VALIANT VINDICATOR OF THE GENES, HERE IN THIS HAVEN OF WHITE FLESH AND DARK THOUGHTS.
NOW THE GREAT MAN IS FINALLY RETURNING TO THE RING, AND GEORGE STRAITE IS OF TWO MINDS ABOUT IT...
...MAINLY BECAUSE IT IS A RING IN WHICH A NIGGER IS CERTAIN TO HUMILIATE ONE OF JAKE'S FELLOW WHITE MEN.
AND YET... JAKE WAS GREAT.
JAKE DE HEAVYWEI
HMM.
FINALLY, IN DARKNESS, GEORGE STRAITE HAS SLEPT ON IT LONG ENOUGH...
... AND, WITH SINGLE-MINDED INTENT, JAKE DeMANSKY'S BRILLIANT CAREER MUST BE LAID TO REST.
YOU WANT ME TO WIN, DON'T YOU, RUDY?
ME? UH-UHN. I JUST LIKE FILLIN' MY NOSE WITH THE FRAGRANCE OF THIS GYM WHILE I WASTE MY TIME TRAININ' A LOSER.
C'MON, RUDY--YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
CUZ I AN ALL-KNOWIN' DARK MAN WITH THE POWER OF VOODOO-SIGHT?
YEAH.
GREENE'S AS BLACK AS YOU-- AND YOU WANT ME TO BEAT HIM?
I WANT YOU TO WIN, BOY, IF IT MEANS WHIPPIN' HIM, THEN I WANT YOU TO WHIP HIM.

BUT WHY, RUDY? IF THE COMMISSIONER, DEEP IN HIS HEART, WOULD LIKE TO SEE A WHITE GUY BEAT THE BLACK CHAMP, WHY DOESN'T THE OPPOSITE HOLD TRUE FOR--
MAYBE I MORE SECURE IN MY SKIN--WITH THE LUXURY OF HAVIN' NOTHIN' TO PROVE..
OR--? THERE WAS AN "OR" IN YOUR VOICE.
YOUR EARS AIN'T GOT CAULIFLOWERS YET, BOY.
OR... MAYBE I GOT A LOT TO PROVE--TO MYSELF.
SUCH AS?
SUCH AS... I AIN'T LIKE THE COMMISSIONER.
BUT YOU'RE NOT SURE?
THE TRUTH, BOY? NO... I DO MY BEST, BUT NO... I AIN'T SURE.
I ONLY KNOW NONE OF US WAS AROUND BEFORE WE WAS BORN PICKIN' OUT ANY COLORS.
HEY--EASY ON THAT BAG.
THAT WAS HONEST, RUDY--AND THAT'S ALL A FIGHTER CAN ASK FROM HIS TRAINER.
BUT YOU EVER FIGURE IT OUT? WHY GOD HADDA PUT SKINS IN THE WAY OF HEARTS?
MAYBE SO'S WE ALL GOTS A CHOICE... BETWEEN BEIN' LIKE THE COMMISSIONER ... AND AIMIN' OUR EYES A LITTLE MORE TRUE.
BY USIN' VOODOO-SIGHT?
WAYNE MANOR:
BIG FIGHT TOMORROW NIGHT, ALFRED.
YES, SIR, I PLAN TO WATCH IT ON THE TELEVISION--
--IF ONLY TO SEE MR. DeMANSKY GRACE THE RING AGAIN.

WHO DO YOU LIKE, ALFRED?
I SHOULD HAVE TO SAY THE CHAMP IS A PROHIBITIVE FAVORITE, SIR... BUT THEN, THAT'S WHAT I SAID ABOUT HAGLER AGAINST DURAN AND--
WHY MUST YOU LIKE ANY OF IT?
TWO UNDEREDUCATED MEN POUNDING SKULLS UNTIL ONE BLEEDS TOO MUCH TO SEE OR COLLAPSES WITH A CONCUSSION.
COME, COME, JULIA, IT'S JUST THE MANLY ART OF SELF--
IT'S VIOLENCE, PURE AND SIMPLE, AND IT'S HORRID.
PERHAPS IF YOU AND MR. WAYNE HAD YOUR SKULLS REPEATEDLY PUNCHED--
MAYBE IT CAN'T BE DEFENDED, JULIA.
MAYBE ITS APPEAL IS SOMETHING SO PRIMITIVE WE CAN'T EVEN UNDERSTAND IT. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, IT MIGHT WELL BE A VICARIOUS CATHARSIS WHICH--
UH, EXCUSE ME, JULIA-- BUT I JUST REMEMBERED A PRESSING ENGAGEMENT.
HMP--WITH MISS VICKI VALE, NO DOUBT.
HERE'S THE NOTE-- PASSED ON TO US BY THE EDITOR OF RINGSIDE MAGAZINE. JUST READ IT.
"JAKE THE GREAT CANNOT BECOME JAKE OF THE JUNGLE. AS ALL TRUE MEN KNOW, EVOLUTION ENDS IN SUCCESS OR DEATH." SIGNED: "A FAN."
M-HM--SO CRYPTICALLY WORDED, YOU CAN'T TELL IF IT'S A THREAT AGAINST DeMANSKY OR NOT...
...BUT IT'S OBVIOUSLY FROM A NUT.
13

HAS DeMANSKY HIMSELF BEEN INFORMED?
HE SHRUGGED IT OFF--WANTS NOTHING TO INTERFERE WITH HIS BIG NIGHT--SAYS EVEN IF IT *IS* A DEATH-THREAT, HE'S GOTTEN PLENTY OF THEM BEFORE, BUT HE MAY NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE LIKE TOMORROW NIGHT.
SO YOU WANT ME TO *BE* THERE, GORDON?
IF POSSIBLE, CLOSER THAN *RINGSIDE*, BATMAN.
GREENE VS DUNFEY WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING CHAMPIONSHIP DeMANSKY- REFEREE
MISER LIKE FREDDIE DON'T BET--HE PINCH A QUARTER TILL THE EAGLE *SCREAM*.
SO HOW'S 'BOUT SOME *ACTION*, FREDDIE?
FIVE TO ONE, SAME AS VEGAS.
'SIDES, EVEN A HIGH-ROLLER WOULDN'T PICK THE WHITE BOY IN *THIS* ONE.
BUT ONE MAN HAS PICKED DUNFEY...
SO HOW MUCH ACTION HAVE WE GOT HERE, WOAD?
ALL TOGETHER, BOSS, WE'RE NEXT DOOR TO 300 GRAND.
EXCELLENT--AT FIVE TO ONE ODDS, OUR TAKE IS A MILLION AND A HALF.
CALL MANNY AND TURK--IT'S TIME FOR YOUR LITTLE DISCUSSION WITH THE CHAMP.
AND SO COMES THE BIG NIGHT.
IT BEGINS PREDICABLY IN A CONTERGENCE OF CHAOS...
14

AND EVERYTHING FROM HERE ON OUT GOES SWIFTLY DOWNHILL.
YOU AIN'T LOSIN' YOUR FIRE NOW, BOY?
SO HARD JUST GETTIN' HERE, RUDY, MAYBE... MAYBE I PEAKED TOO SOON.
DUNFEY
THE CHAMP'S USED TO IT, BUT I'M JUST--
A WHITE BOY OUTTA HIS LEAGUE?
LISTEN TO ME.
IN THE GYM YOU BLEW WITH THE REST OF US AND MOVED WITH THE REST OF US AND YOU EVEN CRIED WITH THE REST OF US, BUT I FOR ONE SEE YOU AS A CROCODILE WITH BIG FAT TEARS THAT DON'T FOOL ME IF NOBODY ELSE.
WHAT THE CHAMP DOES BE IN THE GENES.
WE BORN WITH IT.
I KNOW, YOU WAS BORN TOO AND YOU GOT GENES TOO AND IF GOD MADE US ALL, THEN THE GENES ALL COME FROM THE SAME PLACE WHETHER THEY DIFFERENT OR NOT.
WE BOTH BREATHE THE SAME AIR CUZ WE BOTH COMIN' FROM THE SAME PLACE THAT SAW FIT TO GIVE US LUNGS AND NOSES TO SMELL THE BRIMSTONE WHEN WE ONLY WANNA SNIFF THE FLOWERS.
BUT WHATEVER IT IS THAT LETS YOU BE ABLE TO PASS, IT'S ONCE REMOVED, YOU UNDERSTAND? ONCE REMOVED.
WHAT YOU GOT TO GIVE AIN'T GONNA BE BETTER, BOY, SO YOU BEST BE PREPARED TO GIVE MORE THAN WHAT YOU GOT.
IT'S ONCE REMOVED, YOU HEAR?
AND GIVIN' MORE OF IT IS THE ONLY CHANCE YOU GOT, SO IF YOU AIN'T PREPARED TO FIGHT JUST THIS ONE TIME WAY OVER YOUR HEAD--
SWAK
--YOU JUST BETTER REMOVE YOURSELF ONCE AND FOR ALL.
18

THANKS, RUDY!
LET'S GET IT ON.
DUNFEY
OH, LORD, WHAT HAVE I DONE, BOY?
WHAT HAVE I DONE?
I'M THE CHAMP!
I GOT THE BELT AROUND MY WAIST-- AND I GOT THE BELT IN MY FISTS!
ONE LEADS TO THE OTHER FOR ME-- AND BOTH SPELL DISASTER FOR THE BELT-EE!
WELL, THAT WAS THE CHAMP PERFORMING HIS CUSTOMARY PRE-FIGHT HISTRIONICS, BUT HARDLY WITH THE SAME FERVOR BROUGHT TO BEAR ON PAST OCCASIONS.
PERHAPS MICHAEL GREENE IS TAKING THIS YOUNG CHALLENGER LIGHTLY, AS PERHAPS HE WELL SHOULD.
"BUT PERHAPS HE ALSO LACKS THE FIGHTER'S CRUCIAL WEAPON OF MOTIVATION, RELYING ON THE OVERWHELMING ODDS OF HIS SKILL TO EFFORTLESSLY OUTCLASS HIS NO-NAME OPPONENT...
"BUT AGAIN, WHEN TWO MEN OF THIS SIZE AND STRENGTH CLIMB THROUGH THE ROPES, ANYTHING CAN HAP--
"WAIT A MINUTE...
16

"WAIT A MINUTE--HERE HE IS--THE IMMORTAL, THE GREAT, THE LEGENDARY LIVING LEGEND HIMSELF--FORMER HEAVY-WEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WORLD AND VETERAN OF SOME OF THE GREATEST WARS EVER STAGE, ON CANVAS...
"JAKE DeMANSKY!
"IF WE COULD TURN THE CLOCK FORTY YEARS BACK ON THIS MAN, NOW THEN WE'D HAVE A FIGHT.!!"
IN SILENCE, GEORGE STRAITE SCREAMS THE LOUDEST OF ALL.
YOU WANTED MY BELT, BOY, BUT YOU IN HELL, BOY, AND YOU SURE AIN'T NO BAT, BOY.
AND YET THE WORDS ARE OVERPLAYED, TOO THEATRICAL...
... MAKING IT FITTINGLY IRONIC, THEN, THAT THE MAN WHO SPURNED BOTH STAGE AND RING HAS TURNED THE GREATEST FIGHTER ALIVE INTO A MERE HAM ACTOR.
HE'S PLAYING HIS PART WELL, WOAD.
HANDS TREMBLING, A PIECE OF COLD HARDNESS PRESSED INTO HIS LEFT KIDNEY, GEORGE STRAITE TENSES FOR THE DRAMA SOON TO BE UNLEASHED...
"AND THEN THERE'S THE BELL FOR THE FIRST ROUND!
"BOTH MEN MISS WITH OPENING LEFT JABS-- GREENE SMOOTHLY, DUNFEY WITH LUMBERING AWKWARDNESS...
"AND NOW THEY BACK OFF TO CIRCLE EACH OTHER MORE WARILY...
17

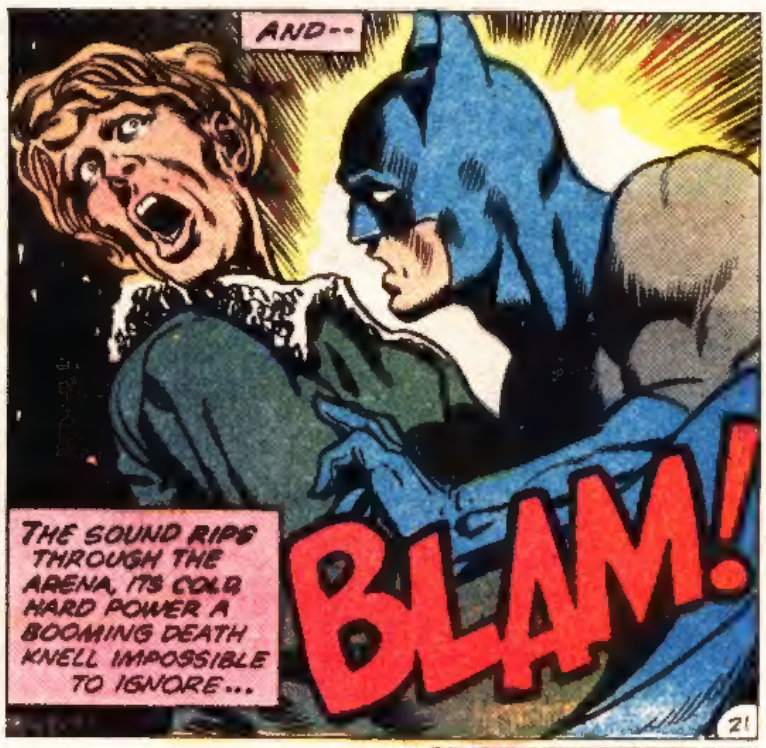
"ROUND TWO AND--THERE--GREENE FINALLY SCORES WITH A CHOPPING RIGHT AS DUNFEY BORES IN!"
IT'S NOW ROUND THREE AND A LACKLUSTER EXHIBITION IT'S BEEN--
--THE CHAMP SEEMINGLY CONTENT TO PEPPER DUNFEY WITH ALMOST TOYFUL JABS HAVING LITTLE OR NO EFFECT.
"I'LL SAY THIS--IT'S BEEN A CLEAN FIGHT, AND WE'VE SEEN REMARKABLY LITTLE OF REFEREE DeMANSKY...
"...BUT I SUSPECT THE CHAMP IS SIMPLY PROLONGING THE SHOW TO JUSTIFY HIS TEN MILLION DOLLAR PURSE."
IT'S WORSE THAN GEORGE STRAITE IMAGINED
"BUT WAIT--A LEFT HOOK FROM DUNFEY OUT OF NOWHERE!
"AND YET, IT WAS NOT A CRUSHING BLOW!"
ONE.. TWO.. THREE...
"AND INCREDIBLY, IT SENDS THE CHAMP TO THE CANVAS!"
BUT WAIT--PERHAPS WITH ENOUGH PATIENCE, MIRACLES CAN HAPPEN...
GET UP AN' FIGHT, GREENE--I DON'T WANNA "WIN" THE TITLE THIS WAY!

GET IN THE NEUTRAL CORNER, DUNFEY, OR I CAN'T CONTINUE THE COUNT.!
WHERE'S YOUR PRIDE? GET UP AND BE A MAN! WHAT YOU GOT AIN'T GOT A PRICE!
"FOR SOME REASON DUNFEY IS ENRAGED, FIGHTING AGAINST DeMANSKY TO REACH THE FALLEN CHAMP."
YOU DON'T DESERVE THE TITLE IF YOU'RE GONNA THROW IT AWAY FOR MONEY!
CHUMP
"HE KICKED HIM! DUNFEY KICKED GREENE WHILE HE WAS DOWN."
FOR MONEY?!
YOU THINK I'D GO DOWN FOR MONEY?!
BOOF
"UTTER PANDEMONIUM, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! NEVER BEFORE HAVE I WITNESSED SUCH SHEER UNBRIDLED BRUTALITY IN THE FACES OF TWO HUMAN BEINGS!
"THE CORNER MEN ARE NOW SURGING INTO THE RING IN HOPES OF BREAKING UP WHAT HAS BECOME A FURIOUS WAR COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL!
19

"THERE ARE NO RULES NOW--NO HOLDS BARRED--
"--AND THE FANS HERE AT RINGSIDE--NOW ANIMAL-LIKE--ARE GOING POSITIVELY BERSERK IN A BLOODY ORGY OF UNRESTRAINED VIOLENCE.
"IT'S HOPELESS NOW--THE REFEREE UTTERLY HELPLESS AGAINST THESE TWO MEN LITERALLY TRYING TO KILL EACH OTHER!
"JAKE DeMANSKY'S RETURN TO THE RING HAS BECOME A CHARADE--
"A MOCKERY OF THE SPORT HE MADE GREAT AND THEN LATER ESCHEWED--AND THE MAN HIMSELF NOW RESEMBLES A FEEBLE SHELL OF HIMSELF, CAUGHT IN THE MIDST OF THIS SHAMEFUL CARNIVAL OF CARNAGE!"
THAT GLINT FROM THE CROWD...
NOT A GOLD RING...
... AND NOT A CIGARETTE LIGHTER...
A GUN
LOOK AT THAT BLOOD!
WHOP!
"THAT PUNCH WAS ENOUGH TO FELL A MULE--AND YET DUNFEY TAKES IT!"
20

HOLD IT!
THE BATMAN!
BUNFF
"AND NOW DUNFEY UNLOADS A MURDEROUS HAYMAKER ON GREENE!"
"BUT BOTH OF THESE MEN ARE SIMPLY TOO STUBBORN-- TOO FILLED WITH ADRENALINE-- TO DROP!"
"OR PERHAPS IT'S ONLY THE STIFFNESS OF HATE THAT'S KEEPING THEM ON THEIR FEET!"
"THIS IS AN EGREGIOUS DISPLAY--A SELF-EVIDENTIARY DEBACLE OF THE WORST STRIPE!"
STOP IT-- PLEEEASE!!

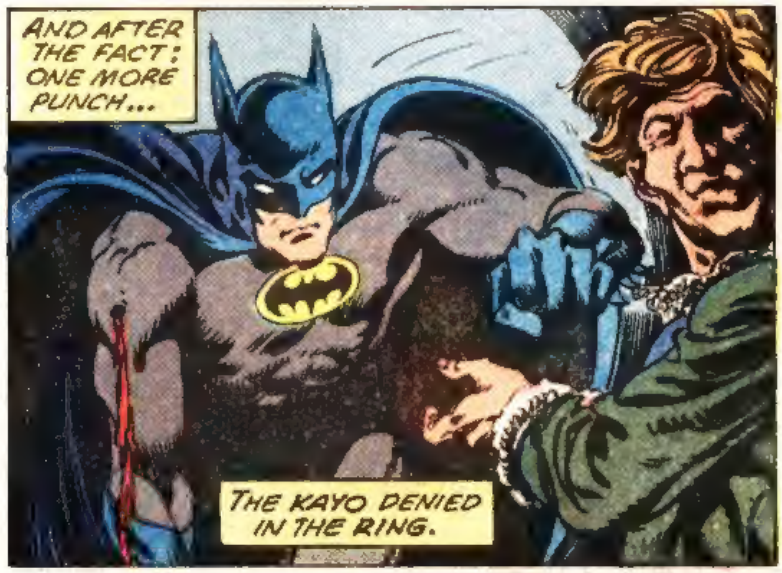
JAKE DeMANSKY'S SHRILL SCREAM REACHES GEORGE STRAITE LIKE A HURLED BLADE OF JAGGED EDGE.
THE PAIN--THE SHAME-- CANNOT BE BORNE.
HE WHIRLS.

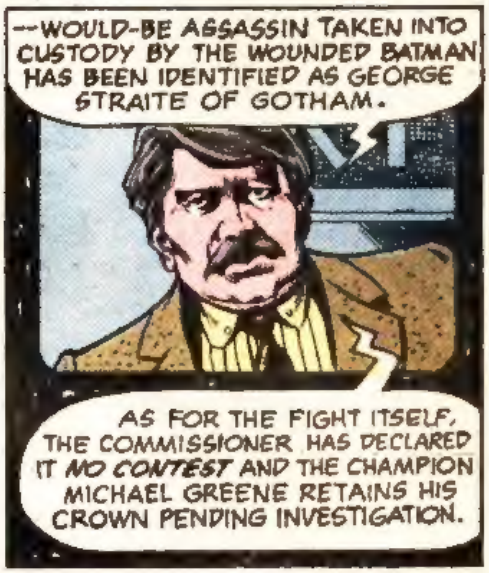


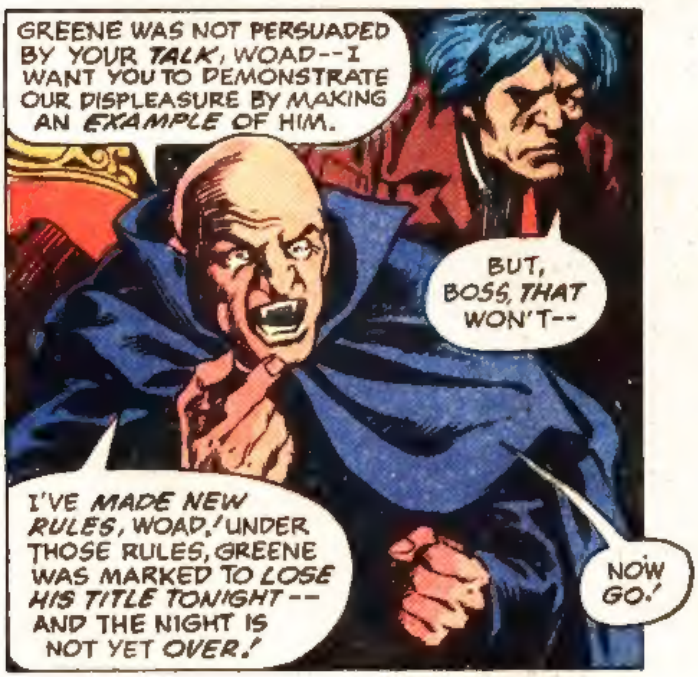
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

EVEN ITS FADING REVERBERATION IS MORE COMMANDING BY FAR THAN A BELL; THE ALREADY-INFAMOUS "SIX-MINUTE ROUND OF CHAOS" FINALLY HALTS.
A... GUNSHOT?

EVERYBODY-- OUT OF THE RING!
THIS WAY, MR. DeMANSKY -- HURRY, PLEASE!
GREENE
SOMEBODY GOT SHOT!


AND AFTER THE FACT: ONE MORE PUNCH...
THE KAYO DENIED IN THE RING.


--WOULD-BE ASSASSIN TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY THE WOUNDED BATMAN HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS GEORGE STRAITE OF GOTHAM.
AS FOR THE FIGHT ITSELF, THE COMMISSIONER HAS DECLARED IT NO CONTEST AND THE CHAMPION MICHAEL GREENE RETAINS HIS CROWN PENDING INVESTIGATION.


GREENE WAS NOT PERSUADED BY YOUR TALK, WOAD--I WANT YOU TO DEMONSTRATE OUR DISPLEASURE BY MAKING AN EXAMPLE OF HIM.
BUT, BOSS, THAT WON'T--
I'VE MADE NEW RULES, WOAD! UNDER THOSE RULES, GREENE WAS MARKED TO LOSE HIS TITLE TONIGHT -- AND THE NIGHT IS NOT YET OVER!
NOW GO!

EXIT
I...I DIDN'T MEAN TO KICK YOU, GREENE...

...BUT AS MUCH AS I WANTED TO WIN THAT BELT... FOR PRIDE, FOR ACHIEVEMENT...
...I COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE YOU LOSE IT FOR SOMETHING AS CHEAP AS MONEY.
IN THE GLOOM, THROUGH DARK GLASSES AND EYES SWOLLEN NEARLY SHUT, IT IS LIKE LOOKING INTO MIRRORS OF X-RAYED GHOSTS.
I TOLD YOU, DUNFEY...
IT WASN'T FOR MONEY.
TWENTY RACES INTO THE NIGHT, SOMEONE ELSE GETS HIS SHOT AT THE CHAMP--
BRAM
--AND MICHAEL GREENE FALLS, STRIPPED OF BELT, CROWN, AND TITLES FOREVER.
MY GOD, GREENE--I WAS BLIND! ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD ISN'T WORTH WHAT YOU HAD...
ONLY ONE THING WAS!
AND THAT THING BLEEDS FROM HIM, IN WANING GOUTS.
MAYBE, IT CAN'T BE DEFENDED WITH EUPHEMISTIC PLATITUDES ABOUT SOME MANLY ART.
MAYBE THE FINAL PRIZE, AND THE ULTIMATE PRICE, IS NOTHING BUT MORE OF THE SAME, COLORED BY THE DESPERATION OF PRIDE, VENGEANCE ... AND YES, HATE.
IF SO, THEN THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO MEN THIS NIGHT WILLING AND EAGER TO TAKE UP THE GAUNTLET, FOR VIOLENCE DOES BREED MORE OF THE SAME.
ANYTHING LESS WILL ALLOW KILLERS TO ROAM BLACK STREETS WITH THE ARROGANCE OF MAD DOGS.
SUCH... NICE... KIDS...
IN THE NEXT DETECTIVE: THE EXPLOSIVE CONCLUSION--
BOXING!
23